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ABSTRACT

This brief illustrated booklet suggests procedures for the incorporation of planned peer tutoring into daily classroom rountines. This method of instruction has been found to be usable with a variety of academic tasks and is seen as one way to achieve individualization of instruction. The booklet focuses on the definition of peer tutoring; benefits of the tutee, tutor and teacher; tutor training techniques; appropriate tutoring tasks (grouped by academic areas); appropriate materials; and record keeping. A brief look at how one teacher uses peer tutoring in her classroom is included. (ED)

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PEER TUTORING:

A COOPERATIVE LEARNING EXPERIENCE

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PEER TUTORING:

A Cooperative Learning Experience

Eva Conrad

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WHY READ THIS BOOKLET?

Teachers generally agree that when one teaches one, two learn. Educators often cite teaching as the ultimate learning process. Based on this belief, open classrooms encourage mixed-ability, small group situations to optimize the opportunities for peer tutoring.

This booklet summarizes relevant research on peer tutoring and from this research basis, suggests procedures for the incorporation of planned peer tutoring as part of daily classroom routine.

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WHAT IS PEER TUTORING?

Peer tutoring is a learning situation characterized by a high level of active participation and mutual benefit to both tutor and tutee. The tutor is the child who functions as the teacher; the tutee is the child (peer) who functions as the pupil.

Learning from peers is an acknowledged on-going process, but organized peer tutoring is rarely included as a planned classroom activity. This method of instruction is usable with a variety of academic tasks, limited only by your imagination.

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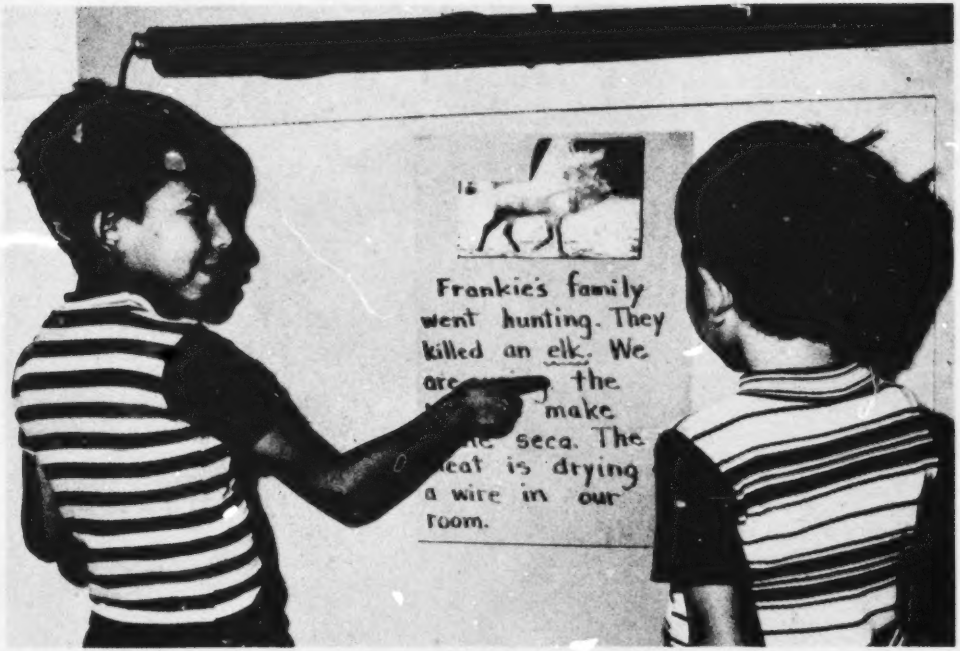

Spontaneous peer tutoring is often seen in classrooms, as in this case where one child is helping another child read a door chart.

HOW DOES THE TUTEE BENEFIT FROM PEER TUTORING?

Peer tutoring provides an opportunity for a child to work in a learning situation with another child who is similar in age and viewpoint. The structuring of subject matter from a child's point of view is perhaps best articulated by another child.

The benefits of individualization of instruction are well-known. Peer tutoring is one way to achieve individualization. Peer tutoring is a situation in which:

— materials are determined by the *tutee's needs;*
— *direct and immediate feedback* is available;
— there is an *absence of stigma* for giving a wrong answer;
— the tutee can closely *observe a peer model's performance* on an academic task.

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"How many words in the -ag family can you mal e?" Peer tutoring is a learning situation in which there is immediate feedback and in which both children are active participants.

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HOW DOES THE TUTOR BENEFIT FROM PEER TUTORING?

One characteristic of innovative peer tutoring programs is that tutor academic gains are equal to or higher than tutee academic gains. An obvious process in tutoring is that *tutors learn by reviewing and reinforcing concepts already learned.* In addition, *tutors learn by reformulating material* to provide examples and explanations for tutees ("learning to learn").

Tutoring provides an opportunity to use knowledge in a meaningful, social activity. In peer tutoring, knowledge is the basis for interaction.

Equally important but not equally measurable are the non-academic gains demonstrated by tutors. *Increased self-confidence* is often demonstrated by quotes such as "I must be fairly good if I can help somebody else."

In peer tutoring, both tutors and tutees have an opportunity to learn in a cooperative atmosphere, instead of a competitive one. This may serve to teach cooperation as well as the specific academic task.

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HOW CAN PEER TUTORING HELP YOU?

With planned peer tutoring, each member of the class can be an *active participant.*

Individualization of education is promoted in two ways by peer tutoring:

— *students spend more time in a 1-to-1 learning situation;*

— you can therefore spend more time
  — in a resource capacity, *specifying instructional style and materials* to meet individual learning needs, and
  — in *working directly with an individual child.*

By observing how peers teach each other, you have an opportunity for new insights into the learning process and possible new teaching techniques.

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WHO SHOULD BE THE TUTOR?

Students of all achievement levels should be given the chance to be designated the tutor. Research has shown that in terms of tutee gains from a peer tutoring session with an association task, the achievement level of the tutor does not matter. Considering the benefits of the tutor role, *all children in a classroom regardless of achievement level should have an opportunity to be a tutor.*

A system of tutor selection that has proven successful is for the teacher to designate or to let children select a two-child *tutor team.* One child is the tutor for half of the session and the other child is the tutor in the other half. Different academic materials could be used depending on which child was the tutee. A detailed example of how this system can be incorporated into daily classroom routine is given on page 27.

Other factors may influence the effectiveness of the team, such as ethnicity or sex, but you know what is best for your students.

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SHOULD THE TUTOR BE TRAINED?

Yes!

It cannot be assumed that a child *naturally* knows how to teach. Observations of untrained peer tutors indicate that children frequently imitate the worst from their teachers, such as punitiveness or not providing corrective feedback. Peer tutoring programs that did not provide tutor training in a specific content area and/or in general teaching strategies were not successful as measured by tutor and tutee gains.

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HOW SHOULD THE TUTOR BE TRAINED?

It has been demonstrated that a small amount of tutor training on two teaching principles can significantly increase tutee achievement in the tutoring session. The two principles are:

I. When given a correct answer, acknowledge that it is correct by saying "yes" or "good" or "that's right."

II. If given an incorrect or no answer, tell the tutee the correct answer and then give the tutee a chance to say the correct answer.

The importance of training is the child's acquisition of these two corrective feedback principles. Obviously, there are multiple teaching techniques and training materials that can be successfully used to teach these corrective feedback skills. The following pages provide *one* of these techniques. Each of you should use materials and training format that is right for you and for your students. Remember, the key to successful peer tutoring is tutors who can appropriately give corrective feedback.

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The teacher models corrective feedback procedures for the peer tutors. Self-correcting materials, such as flash cards, are simple, easy-to-use training tools, but any materials can be used. The process of training corrective feedback is the key, not the materials used.

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Tutor training sessions were conducted in a small group, consisting of an adult and 4 to 6 children. The format of the two sessions was identical and is presented below. The capitalized words state your, the teacher's, actions.

INTRODUCTION: Do you like to be the teacher sometimes? Today we are going to learn some things to do to be better teachers.

5 minutes:

STATE PRINCIPLE: If someone gives you a correct answer, say "yes" or "good" or "that's right." You should always let someone know when he knows the correct answer.

MODEL HOW TO FOLLOW THE PRINCIPLE: Demonstrate this principle by asking each child a question, e.g., holding up a flash card and asking "What is this word?" When the child answers, respond according to the principle (e.g., say "that's right"). Then ask the group, "What did I do that was right?"

ROLE-PLAY: After asking each child a question or two with you as the "teacher," give each child 3-4 cards. Let each child in turn be the "teacher" for the other members of the group. After each question and answer sequence, tell the child he did a good job (if he did), and/or ask the group "What did he do that was right?" or ask "What did he forget?"

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In the peer tutor training session, the children practice giving corrective feedback to a peer.

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5 minutes: STATE PRINCIPLE: If someone gives you a wrong answer or doesn't know an answer,

— tell the correct answer, and
— give the person you are teaching a chance to say the correct answer.

MODEL HOW TO FOLLOW THE PRINCIPLE: Follow the same procedure as above. You should ask the children to pretend that they don't know the correct answer so you can show them what to do when someone doesn't know an answer. Children generally have fun with this pretending.

ROLE-PLAY: Follow the same procedure as above.

5 minutes: STATE BOTH PRINCIPLES

MODEL HOW TO FOLLOW BOTH PRINCIPLES: Follow the same procedure as above.

ROLE-PLAY: Follow the same procedure as above.

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5 minutes: LET THE CHILDREN GIVE YOU FEEDBACK: You be the "teacher" again. Tell the children to watch you and stop you if you make any mistakes. Ask each child two questions, responding according to the two principles only about half of the time. When a child stops you, have him state what you forgot. The children really enjoy this part of the training.

LET THE CHILDREN GIVE EACH OTHER FEEDBACK: Give each child 4-5 cards. Let them in turn play the "teacher" for the other members of the group. Instruct the group to listen carefully and stop the "teacher" if he forgets to apply either of the principles. When a child stops another child, ask the first child to state what the second child forgot. Let each child know that he is right when he gives corrective feedback appropriately.

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WHAT KINDS OF TASKS CAN BE USED IN PEER TUTORING?

Selection of materials to be used during peer tutoring provides the opportunity for the classroom teacher to individualize instruction by designing or designating materials specifically for individual children.

Materials that provide the correct answer, such as word cards with the words on one side and a corresponding picture on the other side, are generally best. The use of these self-correcting materials allows the tutor's achievement level to be irrelevant. This technique can be used to create materials for most academic areas.

Considering your own teaching goals, individual children's needs, and the materials available in your classroom, let your imagination run free in devising individualized peer tutoring tasks.

These pages suggest some structured tasks for use in peer tutoring. However, the overall goal is that children develop tutoring skills. Tutoring can then become an on-going process and can be utilized in a variety of situations throughout the school day.

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Tutoring materials should be individualized to meet the academic needs of the tutee. Here a tutor-team is working with a word ring, composed of words chosen by the tutee and constructed by the two girls in an earlier tutor-team session.

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The following are some suggestions for tasks, grouped by academic area:

Reading:
- — reading books together
- — sight word practice
- — writing a story together

Language Arts:
- — matching letters to pictures that begin with that sound
- — practice with phonics flash cards
- — spelling practice
- — practicing oral language by labeling picture cards
- — preposition practice, e.g., "put the doll beside the box"

Math:
- — use of flannel board, e.g., "show me __ + __ = 4"
- — classification of objects into categories
- — seriation tasks
- — practice with math flash cards

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Academic games are also good materials for peer tutoring sessions:

Alphabet game: Using a bingo format, the tutor calls out the letters; the tutee's task is to match the upper case letters on the bingo card to lower case letters on small disks. This procedure could also be adapted to other matching tasks: letters on the card to be matched to words starting with that sound; numbers on the card to be matched to math equations; colors on the card to be matched to color names.

Wheel game: A series of pictures are exposed one at a time and the tutee's task is to move a clock hand pointing to the first letter of the object pictured.

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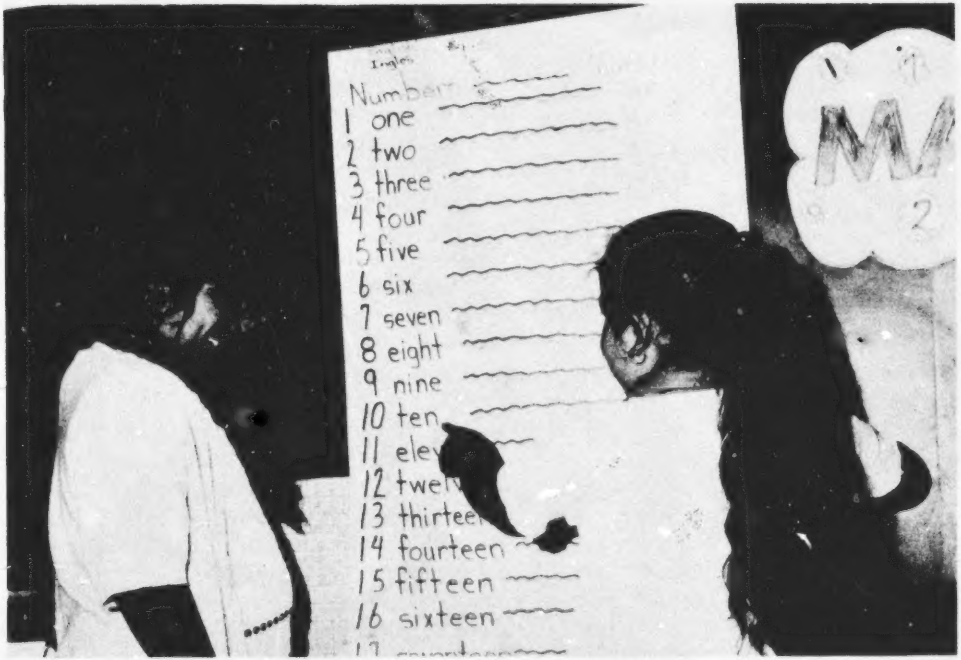

The uses of planned peer tutoring as part of daily classroom routine are many — limited only by your imagination.

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HOW ONE TEACHER USES PEER TUTORING

Ms. Hall teaches in a second grade classroom. Early in the school year, she trained all of her students on the two teaching principles cited in this booklet. The training sessions were conducted in a small group setting. Use of the principles was stressed in both spontaneous and structured peer tutoring.

Ms. Hall divided her class into 11 tutor teams. She teamed the children considering children's preferences, sex, academic task needs, and compatibility. The team members were frequently shifted depending on how well the team worked together and the nature of individual academic needs. Within each tutor team, one child was the tutor for half an hour and the other child was the tutor for the second half-hour. On Wednesday and Friday afternoons the children worked in tutor teams on specific tasks designated by Ms. Hall. During this work time Ms. Hall worked individually with one or two children herself and monitored the progress of the various tutor teams.

Materials for the tutoring sessions usually differ for each team and frequently for each member of the team. Ms. Hall reports that she spent a good deal of time preparing materials for tutor teams initially, but that since children are moving through materials at their own pace, the materials in the different academic areas are being used again and again. Individualization of materials is now accomplished through careful selection of prepared tutoring materials rather than designing new sets of materials each week for each child.

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Each child in Ms. Hall's room records his own progress after the tutoring session by use of a simple recording sheet:

Name:	Date:
Words I know:	Words I will review:

Ms. Hall also keeps records of the tutor teams:

Tutor Team: Julie & Ben		Date: 3/5
Content	Observations	Follow-up
Addition skills	Not a compatible team; will change	Make new problem cards; move into reversibility

00027

An alternative procedure that Ms. Hall has used is to have her children work in their tutor teams as a regular learning center procedure. In the morning the children rotate through the following learning centers: math, language arts, science, and tutor teams. When the children arrive at the tutoring center, they work in their teams on individualized materials Ms. Hall placed in their team folder.

Academic progress of the children in the tutor teams is evident. At least two hours each week are spent in one-to-one interaction, concentrating on the individual child's learning needs. Equally important to Ms. Hall is the social progress she observes. Her impressions are that children are quicker to help each other during regular learning center activities, and that the spirit of cooperation has spread also to playground activities, with her students requesting more group games. The children report that they like peer tutoring, and Ms. Hall reports that it is not unusual to see children working together in tutor teams during child-selection time.

This booklet is based on a research project conducted within the Tucson Early Education Model. A complete research report, entitled, "The Effects of Tutor Achievement, Tutor Training, and Expectancy on Peer Tutoring" may be obtained by writing to:

Information Officer
Arizona Center for Educational
Research & Development
College of Education
University of Arizona
Tucson, Arizona 85721

A nominal fee of $1.75 is charged for printing and mailing costs.

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